CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1.   1.   A method of improving the configuration of a computer system, comprising:

2.   (a)   determining the current configuration of the computer system, said configuration

3. including hardware and software component information, the information including version

4. information;

5.   (b)   determining an overall problem index value associated with the current

6. configuration, said overall problem index value providing a relative indication of the problems in

7. the computer system;

8.   (c)   varying the configuration of the computer system; and

9.   (d)   determining an overall problem index value for the configuration as varied in (c).

1.   2.   The method of claim 1 further including:

2.   (e)   repeating (c) and (d) and selecting the configuration that has the lowest overall

3. problem index value.

1.   3.   The method of claim 2 further including recommending that a user reconfigure the system

2. to match the configuration selected in (e).

1.   4.   The method of claim 3 wherein (c) includes varying the version of each software

2. application in the configuration determined in (a).

1   5.   The method of claim 1 wherein (c) includes varying the version of each software

2   application in the configuration determined in (a).

1   6.   The method of claim 5 wherein (c) does not include varying the version of the hardware

2   components.

1   7.   The method of claim 1 wherein (b) and (d) includes selecting individual problem index

2   values from a knowledge base.

1   8.   The method of claim 7 further including adding together said individual problem index

2   values to determine said overall problem index value for the configuration.

1   9.   The method of claim 1 wherein said overall problem index value is an indication of the

2   number of problems associated with said configuration.

1   10.   The method of claim 1 wherein said overall problem index value is an indication of the

2   severity of problems associated with said configuration.

1   11.   The method of claim 1 wherein said overall problem index value is an indication of the

2   number of problems and the severity of the problems associated with said configuration.

1   12.   A computer system, comprising:

2   a configuration management module;

3   a knowledge base that interacts with said configuration management module; and

4   said configuration management module determines a configuration for a computer user that

5 has fewer problems than the user's current configuration of hardware and software components.

13.   The computer system of claim 12 wherein the configuration management module receives

2 the current configuration of the user's computer system, said current configuration includes

3 hardware and software components and versions of said hardware and software components,

4 determines an overall problem index value associated with the current configuration, said overall

5 problem index value providing a relative indication of the problems in the computer system, varies

6 the configuration of the computer system to produce a new configuration, and determines an

7 overall problem index value for the new configuration.

1 14.   The computer system of claim 13 wherein said configuration management module selects

2 the configuration that has the lowest overall problem index value.

1 15.   The computer system of claim 14 wherein said configuration management module

2 recommends that a user reconfigure the system to match the configuration selected as having the

3 lowest overall problem index value.

1 16.   The computer system of claim 15 wherein said configuration management module varies

2 the version of each software application in the configuration.

1   17.   The computer system of claim 13 wherein said configuration management module varies

2   the version of each software application in the configuration.

1   18.   The computer system of claim 17 wherein said configuration management module varies

2   does not vary the version of the hardware components.

1   19.   The computer system of claim 13 wherein (b) and (d) includes selecting individual problem

2   index values from a knowledge base.

1   20.   The computer system of claim 19 further including adding together said individual problem

2   index values to determine said overall problem index value for the configuration.

1   21.   The computer system of claim 13 wherein said overall problem index value is an indication

2   of the number of problems associated with said configuration.

1   22.   The computer system of claim 1 wherein said overall problem index value is an indication

2   of the severity of problems associated with said configuration.

1   23.   The computer system of claim 1 wherein said overall problem index value is an indication

2   of the number of problems and the severity of the problems associated with said configuration.

1   24.   The computer system of claim 12 wherein said knowledge base includes a collection of

2   problems that have been identified for various hardware or software components.